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THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS SITE



THE ACTUAL FACTS

Relating to the Selection
and Purchase of the Site
versus the Unfounded
Statements Made by
the Haultain Candidates



ARCHIVES OF SASKATCHEWAN

OFFICIAL RECORDS & DOCUMENTS
Completely Refute the Opposition Assertions

THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS SITE

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Driven from the fighting line, with all their varied criticisms of the Government's policy and actions disposed of, the opposition party has harked back to an old story which was fully met and answered in the legislature two sessions ago. We refer to criticism of the Government's action in the purchase of a site for the Parliament buildings. Dr. Elliott is making it one of the chief features of his condemnation of the Government, and even Mr. Haultain has stooped to insinuate wrong doing on the part of the Government and in a recent speech came very close to having charged Messrs McCallum, Hill & Co., with having blackmailed the Government and thus forced them to purchase the site in question. The matter is of little interest and of no political importance in the city of Regina where all the facts are known, but in view of the altogether unfounded assertions made at outside points by Mr. Haultain, Dr. Elliott and others of the Tory party The Leader devotes space to a recital of the actual facts relating to the purchase of the site.

First, the statements being made by the Haultain party may be noted so that our readers can carefully compare their assertions with the facts. It is charged that McCallum, Hill & Co. bought the property at a very low figure from Mr. Sinton and then turned it over to the Government at a greatly advanced price, thus reaping enormous profits. The Government is condemned for not having bought direct from Mr. Sinton and thus saved the middlemen's profits. It is furthermore alleged that the city of Regina offered the Government a free site which they declined, preferring to buy from McCallum, Hill & Co. In the third place it is said that the site purchased is a long distance from the city

and that a better site closer in could have been purchased for much less money. To sum up the whole case against the Government it is finally asserted that there were "reasons" which virtually compelled the Government to buy the site they did.

Now for the facts. In regard to the contention that the Government should have purchased the property direct from Mr. Sinton, it is only necessary to note certain dates. Mr. Sinton sold the property to McCallum, Hill & Co. on May 9, 1906. At that time it was not known whether the Capital would be located at Regina or Saskatoon. The vote on the Capital location question did not take place in the legislature until May 23, 1906, two weeks after Mr. Sinton had sold his property. It was utterly impossible for the Government to buy a site for the Buildings before it was known what city would be chosen as the Capital. Furthermore, it may be stated as a positive fact that as far back as 1905, even before the Province of Saskatchewan was created, McCallum, Hill & Co. had endeavored to purchase this property from Mr. Sinton. They had already obtained an option on the Klein property adjoining it. Why, it may be asked, did McCallum, Hill & Co. wish to purchase the property? The answer is simple. Real estate was on the boom in Regina. Annexes and sub-divisions were being placed on the market. McCallum, Hill & Co. had previously placed Wascana Park sub-division on the market and sold tens of thousands of dollars worth of lots. Wascana Park was practically sold out and they wanted other property to place on the market. This was their sole reason for desiring the property, the same reason which actuated J. M. Young in securing and sub-dividing the Eastern Annex; James Balfour in handling Belvedere; Mr. McArar in dealing in Assinibola Place.

As to the statement that McCallum, Hill & Co. made enormous profits on the deal, what are the

facts? For the property they sold to the Government they paid Mr. Sinton \$400 an acre; they had gone to the expense of having it sub-divided into lots; plans of the sub-division had been prepared, and the property had been advertised for sale commencing June 25th. On June 22nd the Government purchased 35 of the choicest blocks of the property at \$2,750 per block, or something over \$500 per acre. Most of the people of the West were dabbling in real estate in 1906 and most, too, were not content at that time with 25 or even 50 per cent. but expected to double and treble their money. Nobody denies that McCallum, Hill & Co. made some money on the transaction, but after paying \$400 an acre for the property and undergoing subsequent expenses no one can say that their profit was anything like what usually pertained in land transfers in 1906, nor anything like what would have accrued to them from the retail sale of the lots to individuals.

As to the further statement that the city offered the Government a free site, what do the public records show? The Government purchased the site from McCallum, Hill & Co. on June 22, 1906. On July 3, 1906, the city council by resolution on motion of Ald. Balfour offered the Government between 40 and 50 acres of city property adjoining the jail property. This resolution was transmitted to Premier Scott by the city clerk under date July 7, 1906, or two weeks after the Government had finally purchased the property of McCallum, Hill & Co. The city's offer was made after and not before the site was bought.

The statement that the site is too far removed from the city is rather weak in view of the fact that there is only the width of the Wascana reservoir between the property offered by the city and that purchased by the Government.

The other statements that better and cheaper sites could have been secured is best answered by a letter from Hon. J. A. Calder to Premier Scott which was laid on the table of the legislature at its second session. That official communication covers the whole ground and is as follows:—

Regina, June 14, 1906.

My Dear Scott,—

Since returning to Regina from my trip over the Soo line I have, as you requested, made careful inquiries respecting the areas possible or suitable as a site for the Government buildings and have ascertained as definitely as I could the value of these properties. Attached hereto you will find maps and plans which give the situation of the several properties to which I shall have occasion to refer.

(1) Victoria Park, (2) Town Park, (3) Jail property, (4) Block 164, (5) Balfour property, (6) old Sinton property, (7) C. P. R. property.

Victoria Park—To my mind this block of land is too small for our purpose. It contains only about six acres. At present there is a movement on foot to have the eastern side of the park subdivided and sold for business purposes. It seems to me that ultimately this will be done owing to its proximity to the business centre of the city.

Town Park—This would be a desirable location, but I doubt very much if it would be advisable for the Government to take possession of it. Should Victoria Park be disposed of, as above suggested, the city would be unable to secure one without going out a considerable distance. The block contains about 40 acres.

Jail Property—This property is at present owned by the Dominion Government. You will be able to ascertain at Ottawa whether it is intended that we should be given possession of it or not. I understand it contains over 200 acres, a large part of which is farmed by the prisoners. As it is not likely that we will build a new jail for two or three years, I have serious doubts as to whether we should use the land for building or not. Besides, there is another factor that should be taken into consideration, namely, that the growth of the best part of the city will be mainly toward the west, north-west and south-west. As you are aware, a large portion of the jail property lies east of Hamilton Street, or, in other words, south of the eastern part of the

city. This, I think, is a decided objection that should not be lost sight of. Should we eventually come into possession of this property we would have no difficulty whatever, if it were deemed advisable, to dispose of it at a figure that would amply compensate the Government for any outlay it may make now for other property. The northern part of the block of land is now worth from \$8,000 to \$16,000 per block of about 40 lots.

Block 164—This property contains six blocks, comprising about 20 acres. The south-eastern part of it on Dewdney street is rather low. It is valued from \$50,000 to \$60,000 by one of the owners. Other properties in its neighborhood can be purchased at about the same rate. In fact, blocks north of it can be secured at a less figure.

Balfour Property—The four blocks indicated on plan can be secured for about \$36,000; the two blocks west at about \$5,000 to \$8,000 per block. Each block contains about 3.1-2 acres, or including streets, about 4.1-3 acres. The property lies well, is nearly opposite Government House and, if considered large enough, would be suitable.

C. P. R. Property—This block of land is being surveyed and will shortly be placed on the market for sale. As it lies somewhat close to the railway it is, to my mind, unsuitable for our purpose. I have not been able to secure valuations but this can be done later if it is considered a desirable site.

Old Sinton Property—This property lies immediately south of the reservoir. It has been subdivided into lots and is advertised for sale, commencing June 25. It lies well and would make a beautiful building spot. Any quantity of land can be purchased now as no lots have as yet been sold.

The above contains a brief description of what I consider the available sites. I have not entered into more minute particulars as I know that you, as well as other members of the Government have a good general idea of the properties mentioned. I would suggest that you get together while at Ottawa and come to some conclusion as to what should be done as the longer the matter is put off the more difficult it is going to be to settle. It is also likely that real estate values will increase very rapidly during the next few weeks. Then again, if it is intended that we should make a beginning with our buildings it is important that the architect should make him-

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self acquainted with the site and its surroundings before commencing work on plans.

As regards my own views of the matter, I have come to several conclusions after carefully considering the whole situation. In the first place, I am strongly of opinion that the site selected should comprise from 100 to 200 acres. I think a very grave mistake would be made by selecting a comparatively small area. Then again, I don't think the buildings should be erected north of the C. P. R. track. This I believe is the consensus of opinion of all disinterested parties. The best part of the city lies towards the south and southwards and it is likely to expand indefinitely in these directions.

Of the properties lying south of the city I have no hesitation in saying that the old Sinton property is my choice. It lies high and dry and if the buildings were erected there they would face the city and at the same time overlook the reservoir. The grounds could be easily beautified. Water and sewerage connection can be easily made at a comparatively small cost. While at first I thought the property too far from the centre of the city, upon examination I find it just as close as the Dewdney street property. Besides in deciding the question of a site, the fact must be borne in mind that at an early date there is every likelihood that we will have a street car service.

The whole Sinton property comprises 481 acres. Of this the 171 acres adjoining the reservoir cost the present owners, McCallum, Hill & Co., \$400 an acre. As intimated above, the property is subdivided and will be offered for sale in small parcels in about ten days. The same firm own Wascana Park, the greater portion of which has been disposed of at from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per block, and I have no doubt that if they wish to do so they would be able to sell the Sinton property at about the same rate, more especially as it is better situated, not at all broken, and overlooks the reservoir. While the owners are desirous of having the Government buildings situated in the southern part of the city, they do not feel at all disposed to transfer the most saleable portion of their property at a sacrifice, more especially as they are firmly convinced that the city will expand to the south and southwest. The smaller area enclosed by red lines on the blue print showing the addition to Wascana Park contains some 36 blocks and the larger 45 blocks. As each block averages about 4 1-2 acres, includ-

ing streets, these parcels contain respectively 162 acres and 202 acres. Personally, I am inclined to the view that the smaller area would be sufficient. The owners place a valuation on it of about \$3,000 per block, or a total of about \$108,000. It is possible, however, that it might be secured at from \$90,000 to \$100,000. These figures compare very favorably with the values of Dewdney street properties, as is shown by the following statement: Block 164, 6 blocks, value \$55,000; Balfour property, 4 blocks, value \$36,000; Sinton property, 36 blocks, value \$108,000.

I may also state that the average price of blocks in Wascana Park, immediately south of the creek, is about \$5,000 per block.

After consulting Lamont and Motherwell, I wish you would let me know by wire any decision you may reach, and I would again urge the necessity for taking immediate action in order to put an end to the uncertainty and, to my mind, unwise speculation at present going on in the city. I am likely to be in Regina till Thursday next.

Yours truly,

(Signed) J. A. CALDER.

On June 19th Premier Scott telegraphed Mr. Calder from Ottawa stating that Mr. Lamont, Mr. Motherwell and himself were unanimously in favor of the proposition to purchase the lesser area of the Sinton property, and Mr. Calder was instructed to make the purchase immediately on the best terms he could obtain, but, added the Premier, "I think one hundred thousand outside price." As noted at the commencement of this article, the price actually paid was \$96,250.

The judgment of the members of the cabinet that the Sinton property offered the finest site for the buildings has since been confirmed by no less an expert than Mr. Cass Gilbert, the celebrated New York architect, who designed the Minnesota State Capitol, and by every architect, landscape authority and contractor of repute who has visited Regina. Finally, it is to be doubted whether there could be found in this city to-day two score men who would not agree with the decision arrived at by the Government.